

## CHAPTER VII

### OSIRIS AND THE SUN

OSIRIS has been sometimes interpreted as the sun-god; and in modern times this view has been held by so many distinguished writers that it deserves a brief examination. If we inquire on what evidence Osiris has been identified with the sun or the sun-god, it will be found on analysis to be minute in quantity and dubious, where it is not absolutely worthless, in quality. The diligent Jablonski, the first modern scholar to collect and sift the testimony of classical writers on Egyptian religion, says that it can be shown in many ways that Osiris is the sun, and that he could produce a cloud of witnesses to prove it, but that it is needless to do so, since no learned man is ignorant of the fact<sup>1</sup>. Of the writers whom he condescends to quote, the only two who expressly identify Osiris with the sun are Diodorus and Macrobius. The passage in Diodorus runs thus:<sup>2</sup> "It is said that the aboriginal inhabitants of Egypt, looking up to the sky, and smitten with awe and wonder at the nature of the universe, supposed that there were two gods, eternal and primaeval, the sun and the moon, of whom they named the sun Osiris and the moon Isis." Even if Diodorus's authority for this statement is Manetho, as there is some ground for believing,<sup>3</sup> little or no weight can be attached to it. For it is plainly a philosophical, and therefore a late, explanation of the first beginnings of Egyptian religion, reminding us of Kant's familiar saying about the starry heavens and the moral law rather than of the

<sup>1</sup> P. E. Jablonski, *Pantheon Aegypti*,<sup>2</sup> Diodorus Siculus, i. 11. I. *tio-ntm* (Frankfort, 1750-1752), i. 125

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<sup>3</sup> See p. 116, note <sup>2</sup>.